



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT TO THE BOARD

To: WSD Board President and Board of Trustees
From: Wilmer Chavarria, WSD Superintendent
Re: **Superintendent's Report for March 2024**
Date: 3/13/2024

Dear Members of The Board,

Below please find my report for **March 2024** and refer any questions about a given item directly to me during the regularly scheduled board meeting or to the Board President and me if your inquiry is prior to the meeting.

Thank you for your work in advancing the mission of our district to form students who will "lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community."

Respectfully Submitted,

Wilmer A. Chavarria, NBCT
Superintendent of Schools
Winooski School District
wchavarria@wsdvt.org



KEY DATES

- 3/14: Early Release at 12:15, No School for Pre-K
- 3/15: Pre K Skills Screening and Pre-Registration
- 3/10-4/14: Ramadan Observed
- 3/24: Holi Celebration, 12:00pm - 3:00pm, WSD
- 3/28: Community Iftar, 6:45pm, WSD
- 4/4-5: Kindergarten Screening
- 4/8 No School (Solar Eclipse)
- 4/9: School Recess, No School Pre-K – 12. No afterschool activities (Eid-al-Fitr)
- 4/18-19: JFK Parent Teacher Conferences, Early Release at 11:00 am, MHS In-service
- April 22-26: School Recess – No School Pre-K -12

ADMINISTRATIVE ENGAGEMENTS

- This week I met with the City Manager to collaborate and co-plan between the city and the district. Among other topics, we discussed the recently approved budgets.
- On Saturday March 9, I attended the Junior Iron Chef competition taking place at the Champlain Valley Expo, where our wonderful middle school team took the Crowd Pleaser Award for a second year in a row. Congratulations Kamiya Coleman, Ankita Dhungana, Aili Olson, and Anisha Tamang!
- On February 23, I attended the Vermont Educational Equity Collective monthly gathering in Essex.
- On March 7, I attended the Vermont Superintendents Association's post-budget vote emergency meeting.
- On March 7, I joined board members for Policy Governance training offered by the VSBA.
- On March 8, I attended the monthly meeting for the Champlain Valley Superintendents Association in the morning and the Vermont Superintendents Associations' mentorship program in the afternoon.
- On March 11, I attended the Anti-Racism Steering Committee meeting.



A high school student wondering why there's a camera making loud clicking noises in music class.

GENERAL UPDATES

- We are designing a process for assigning parking badges to all staff and high school students in an effort to better track parking and to lessen parking lot stress. Currently it is incredibly hard to find parking during the school day.
- On March 22nd our district will participate in the regional state fair being organized by UVM. Sarah Haven and I will join Kelley Freeman to speak to prospective applicants. This will be the first cycle where our new recruitment and hiring processes facilitated by TNTP over the past two years will be used.
- Everyone is invited to the Holi celebration this Sunday March 24 starting at noon. This even will be outdoors with the rain option being inside our new gymnasium. Another important celebration later that week is Iftar on Thursday 28 starting at 6:45 in the school cafeteria.

CALENDAR AND MORE...

- **The Chittenden area superintendents** are responding to multiple pressures regarding the April 8 eclipse. We had a final meeting on Monday March 11. It was decided that we will all close schools for the day. The District Office Manager will be distributing eclipse glasses to all students.

- **After much consultation** with different stakeholders, including the union and school administration, I decided to formalize our change to start the school day at 8:15 for students. As will be explained in the presentation during our March meeting, the school building will continue to open at 7:30 as is currently the case. Bus schedules will be modified by 15 minutes to match the new school start time. Among the many benefits this change can bring to student learning, we hope that instructional quality begins to improve as a result of the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the increase in time for student support team meetings, and additional teacher capacity to lesson plan and collaborate with peers without being in a rush.

- **The new school calendar** is in the Board packet for your review and approval. Because the Board approves the number of days, it is important that you approve this version reflecting one less teacher day and one less student day compared to the current year. The required number of student days in the state is 175. We will be at 176. Our days added up to 176 because of the complex task of creating our district-specific calendar while fulfilling the CVSA regional calendar conditions. We also have a couple more holidays than other districts due to the communities we serve.

- **Our Director of Communications** Miriam Greenfield will join the other directors of communications from Colchester and Essex Westford to craft a press release for the new regional calendar that will be distributed in all communities covered. This was a decision made by the Champlain Valley Superintendents Association in order to maintain consistent messaging and for communities to know that everyone had to make some compromises to make it work.

RAMADAN

- We are celebrating Ramadan this month through the beginning of April. Our schools have sent instructions to staff for considerations around supporting students and staff who celebrate and fast through the day. We have a dedicated prayer space, and a staff member coordinating support for students who pray.



The 6th grade celebrated the Great Dumpling Challenge of 2024! In this Expedition, math, social studies, and science come together for tasty interdisciplinary learning where students learn about hydroponics to grow the herbs that are put in an internationally diverse array of recipes that need to be doubled and tripled for the taste test and celebration!

GENERAL UPDATES

- The IT department conducted a test of our district-wide announcement system during our February break. We made some adjustments and have identified areas for future improvements.
- The High School boys basketball made it to the semi-finals. They fought through adversity and came up one point short of going to the championship game. After the historic undefeated team from last year and graduating nine seniors, this playoff was remarkable.
- Our Middle School A team Boys won the Christ the King tournament.
- Our High school girls put up a good fight against quarterfinal match-up Vergennes.
- Our Middle School Girls had amazing season and battled every opponent. They came together as one. We are proud of our Sisters in Sports program with St Mike's Girls Basketball team. These college mentors supported our girls at games and practices. Our athletes got a chance to attend a game in have a Pizza Party. Four of our athletes will get to attend a St. Mike's Basketball for free through this program.
- JFK 4th graders completed their Poetry, Poets, and Becoming Writers EL Module. Rajnii Eddins, a local poet, came to school to work with our students to create their own poetry. Families were invited in to hear the students final pieces ina poetry showcase.
- JFK had an anonymous donor who donated money for a second GagaBall pit for the playground. The facilities team assembled the Gagball pit and it is ready to use. This is a favorite recess activity and the donation will enable more students to be able to play each day now that we have two!
- JFK used part of our professional learning day after vacation to have cross-grade-level conversations. These conversations allowed teachers to discuss their teaching and students learning with the grade levels above and below them.
- Just before our February break middle and high school families engaged in family conferences.
- We are in the middle of master scheduling and reviewing student sign ups and interesting learning experiences/courses for next year. The high school at the same time has worked with teachers, students, and ongoing with special educators & ML educators to consider a schedule that may better serve students in our proficiency based learning system.



Kitchen staff serving lunch during the noon rush.

FROM FACILITIES

- **The month of February has been a very busy month** for the Facilities Team members. We have been creeping in on our help desk tickets we receive and are happy to say we are sitting at a whopping 35, which is outstanding. The team has been knocking them out in record time! This is a big accomplishment for us as we are still weeding through the many we were dealt with after construction. Over February break, we were able to perform more of our deep cleaning we typically focus on which we do not have time to focus on during the normal school day. We took the beginning of the break and got some much needed outside work done as the weather was delightful and made us all eager to look towards spring. As the seasons start to change, we will turn our focus onto spring sports and preparation of the fields. This is work that is exciting and pleasurable and as we have new team members on hand, helping them learn the trades of field prep work will be a task well learned and taught. Let's bring on the warmer weather!

GENERAL UPDATES (CONT.)

- Ms Students participated in the Jr. Iron Chef Competition on Sat, March 9th. The Winooski Wild Onions team won The Crowd Pleaser Award for the second year in a row!! Their dish was Street Corn Risotto Cakes. This award goes to the team that best incorporates color, texture, and taste for a true crowd pleaser. Way to go Kamiya, Ankita, Aili and Anisha! A special shout out to Adam Raftery and Camilla Thomassen-Tai for helping our students prepare for the competition.
- The third session of 21C Afterschool kicks off on March 11th. Check out the offerings for Session 3 on the WSD website under the parent and family tab.
- With Winooski voters passing the school budget, our Early Learning team will begin working on expanding our preschool programming.
- We are having our spaces inspected by the Child Development Division in the Vermont Agency of Human Services to ensure full compliance with their preschool regulations.
- To adhere to the licensing ratio regulations, we have developed an Early Childhood Search Committee to start the rigorous process of recruiting and hiring high-quality Early Childhood Educators.
- Winooski Early Childhood Program at JFK will be offering a full-day 8:00 am - 3:00 pm option for the 2024-2025 school year. We will prioritize 4-year-old students for the full school day opportunity which will allow us to support the growth of school readiness skills.

Staff members cheering during an all-school celebration in the Performing Arts Center.





- Beginning in February, Officer Ziter started teaching DARE Classes during 5th grade guidance time. The DARE curriculum teaches students how to make informed decisions with tools that help them evaluate the situations they are in. Classes also include information on Alcohol, tobacco and vaping, what to do when confronted with peer pressure and techniques to help students make appropriate decisions.
- On February 20th and 21st during High School Health class, Jason had the opportunity to teach the American Heart Association - Hands Only (bystander) CPR. This course teaches students how to recognize when someone is having a medical emergency, when to call 911 and then how to perform the life saving skills of CPR. There was an additional opportunity to teach STOP The BLEED. This life saving course teaches students how to recognize life threatening bleeding.
- On February 29th the Winooski Police Department held a training conference for School Resource Officers and Youth Services Officers to agencies from around Vermont. We had agencies represented from Orleans county to Bennington County, over 20 officers and deputies were in attendance. The day consisted of instructors from the following areas.
 - o Human trafficking
 - o How to identify needs for subpoenas and search warrants for Instagram & SnapChat
 - o Juvenile Violence
 - o Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)



Art students posing with their self-portraits

OTHER UPDATES

- **We have been given \$568,085.70 in school improvement funds** to address our graduation rate, and academic outcomes. Thus far we have invested these funds in classroom libraries, professional development in literacy, math and project-based learning, professional development in culturally responsive practices and classroom management, and a digital platform for managing MTSS.
- **We have made** considerable gains in developing and organizing a pk-12 aligned curriculum in a consistent format.
- **In hearing how other superintendents** speak about the budget situation in the state, it is clear that a narrative is being advanced by some that the new funding formula promotes “inequities” because some communities receive more capacity than others. I want the Board to be watchful of narratives such as these that are typical of periods of backlash again equity initiatives, especially when the advancement of equity requires real and concrete measures in the distribution of a state’s resources. Many people will cast themselves as champions of equity until there is something to give up. We are witnessing a textbook example of “interest convergence” in real time, and we must be ready to call it out as appropriate.

FROM THE MHS SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Good afternoon colleagues,

Before you head out for the weekend, your school counselors would like to share a message of celebration. 🎉

Later this evening, UVM will be sharing admissions decisions with our 12th graders who have applied. Out of 17 students who applied to UVM, 14 have been accepted. This is a phenomenal achievement for each one of them individually. At the same time, it is a forceful testament to the work you have all done with these students throughout their time in high school.

Your quality instruction and ability to connect important skills to relevant and engaging learning opportunities has clearly prepared these students to make this next step. We thank you all deeply for supporting these students throughout their time at WHS and for writing impactful letters of recommendation.

As a Counseling Department, this was our first year using the platform SCOIR to manage application materials, and all in all it made things a lot smoother. We appreciate your flexibility as we developed our systems (and learned along the way) and we're certain next year's 12th graders will have an even smoother process.

Although going to college is just one pathway after high school, and UVM is just one school, this is a prime example of all of our work with students coming to fruition and we wanted to take a moment to celebrate it.

Thank you for all you do!

Sincerely,

Your School Counselors

ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

Below are a few items the board assigned to management along with a status update.

Item	Board Direction	Status
Meeting Link	The website still showed the old meeting link.	The website has been updated with the Google Meet link.
Budget Reflection	Board member Isaiah and Nicole expressed wanting the tax rate modeling earlier in the process	The budget process timeline was updated to include tax rate modeling for the first meeting in December and another for the first meeting in January which is the earliest modeling can be done after the forecasted yield (December 1) and the CLA are released (first thing January). The December modeling can only include guesses about CLA, so two scenarios are specified in the plan.
Student Nutrition	After hearing from a student, the Board reflected on their role regarding student nutrition and requested that a future policy monitoring report reflect actions related to incorporating student voices in nutrition planning.	The Director of Finance and Operations is working with the Director of Multilingual Programs and the Wellness Coordinator to gather a committee of stakeholders to look into this matter and planning for improvements before the summer. An update can be provided when the Board requests it next year.
Emergency Succession Process	The board requested that the Emergency Succession process be shared and clarified to all parties mentioned in the document.	The approved process was provided to all parties involved, including the District Office Manager and the Leadership Team (directors and principals).
Pre-K Staffing Model	Board member Nicole asked whether with the Pre-K expansion we'd just have even more issues with staffing. The Superintendent explained that it may be easier to problem solve in a larger scale because staff can be moved around but a note was made to consult with the early learning director.	The Director of Early Learning has been invited to attend the Board meeting and provide input during the monthly report review.
Start of the School Day	Board Member Nicole Mace requested a presentation for how the time will be	A brief presentation is included in the Board's agenda and packet.

	distributed to advance professional learning and improved instruction	
School Calendar	Superintendent Chavarria presented the approved regional calendar and said that he would bring back the Winooski-specific calendar based on the regional one. The board wants to approve it, which the Superintendent is ok with, but the Board is only required to approve the number of staff/student days, not the specifics of the calendar itself.	The Winooski-specific calendar is included in the Board packet for Board discussion and approval.
Policy C70 Restraint and Seclusion	Board President Robert pointed out that there was a formatting error in the implementation introduction.	Formatting is fixed.
Board Stipend Change	The memo was rescinded after Board member Nicole Mace found a statute that clarifies this falls under the powers of the electorate. It will be added to next year's warning.	A note to add as an article to voters for next year was added to the Annual Plan draft for the Board.
Board Orientation	Board discussion brought to light that there needs to be a more formalized board orientation process.	A board orientation schedule was drafted and in the agenda for discussion.
Ends Statement Metrics	Board member Nicole Mace would like to see opportunities for the new board to engage in conversation about ways in which to concretely measure progress toward achieving the Ends Statement	Future board planning still pending.

RECOMMENDED ITEMS TO REVIEW

It is my recommendation that the board review all agenda items in your packet ahead of time and be prepared to approve the Consent Agenda and other applicable items produced by the administration and listed for approval.